

Brion Vibber
CTO, Wikimedia Foundation

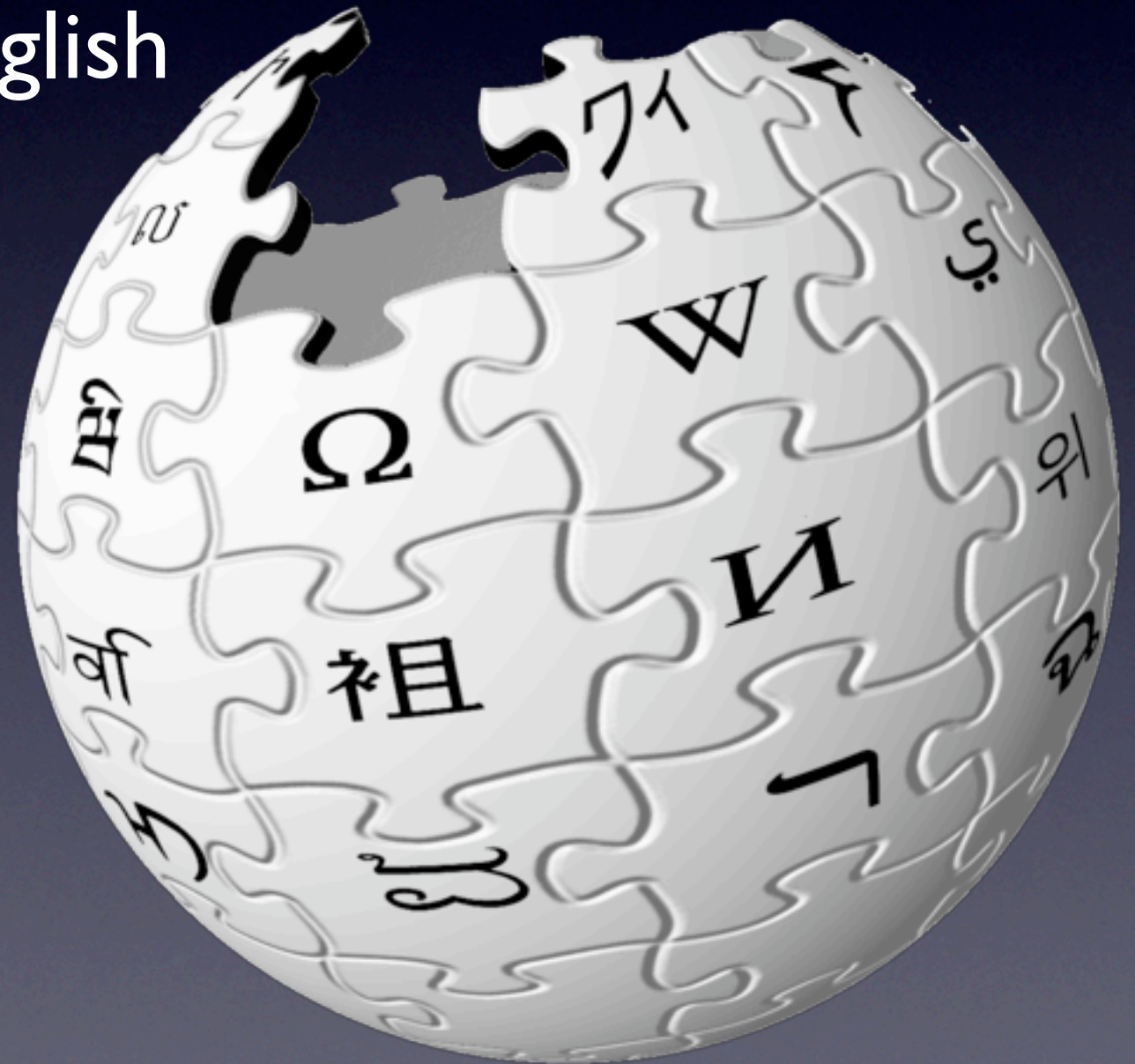
Online Community Report Meetup
San Francisco, CA 2008-10-22

Wikis, Wikimedia, and Community



Wikipedia!

- Started 2001
- 2.5 million articles in English
- Millions more in 200+ languages
- Website? Community? Encyclopedia? All of the above?



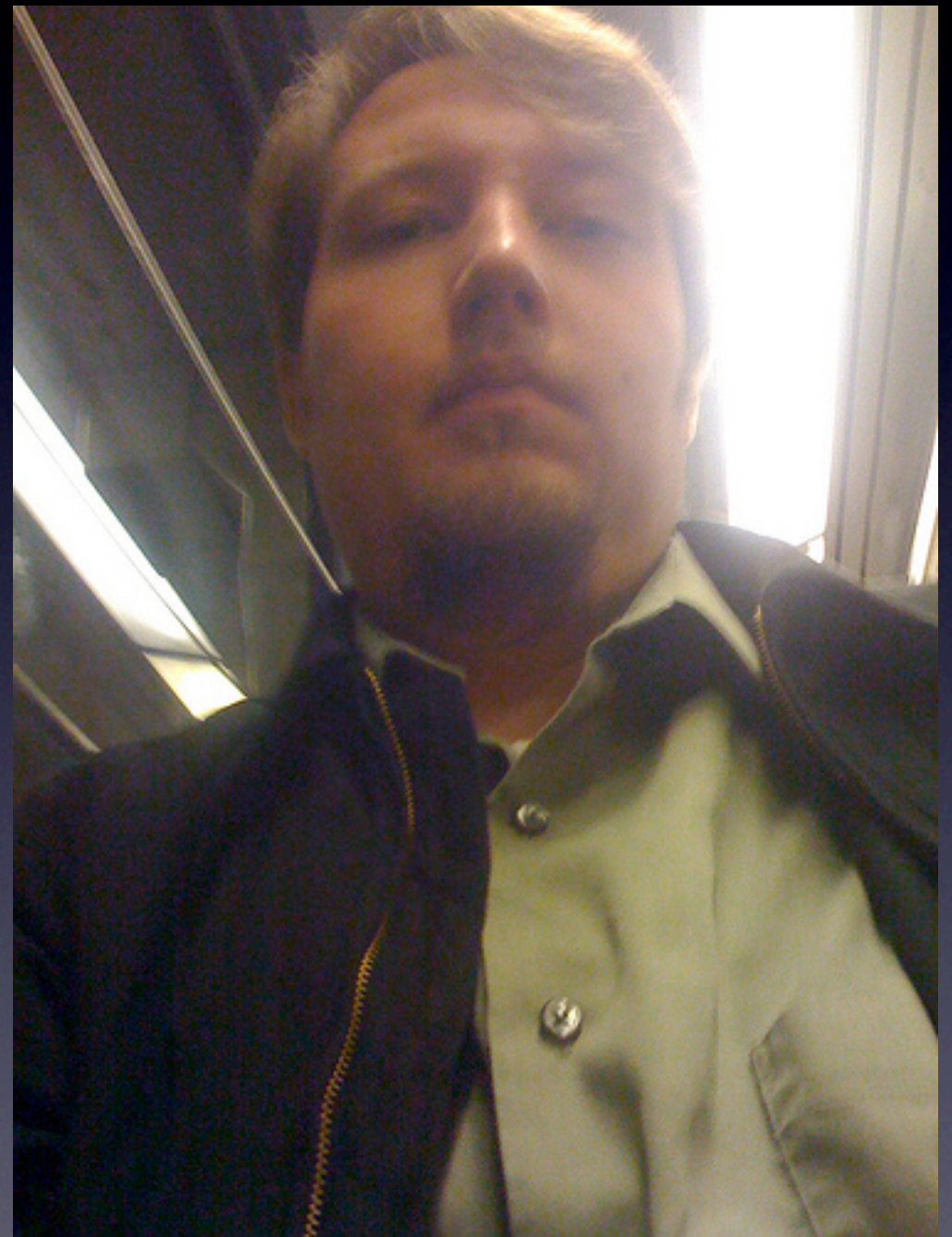
Wikimedia!

- 501(c)3 charity
- Founded 2003 to operate and support Wikipedia
- Born from, serving, and guiding the community
- About 20 staff
- 2008-2009 budget: \$6M



Me!

- Wikipedian since 2001
- Maintaing MediaWiki software since 2002
- Wikimedia Foundation CTO since 2005
- Annual budget much less than \$6M, but I accept donations too



What's a dang Wiki?



What a Wiki *does*...



What a wiki *is*...

Wiki is project

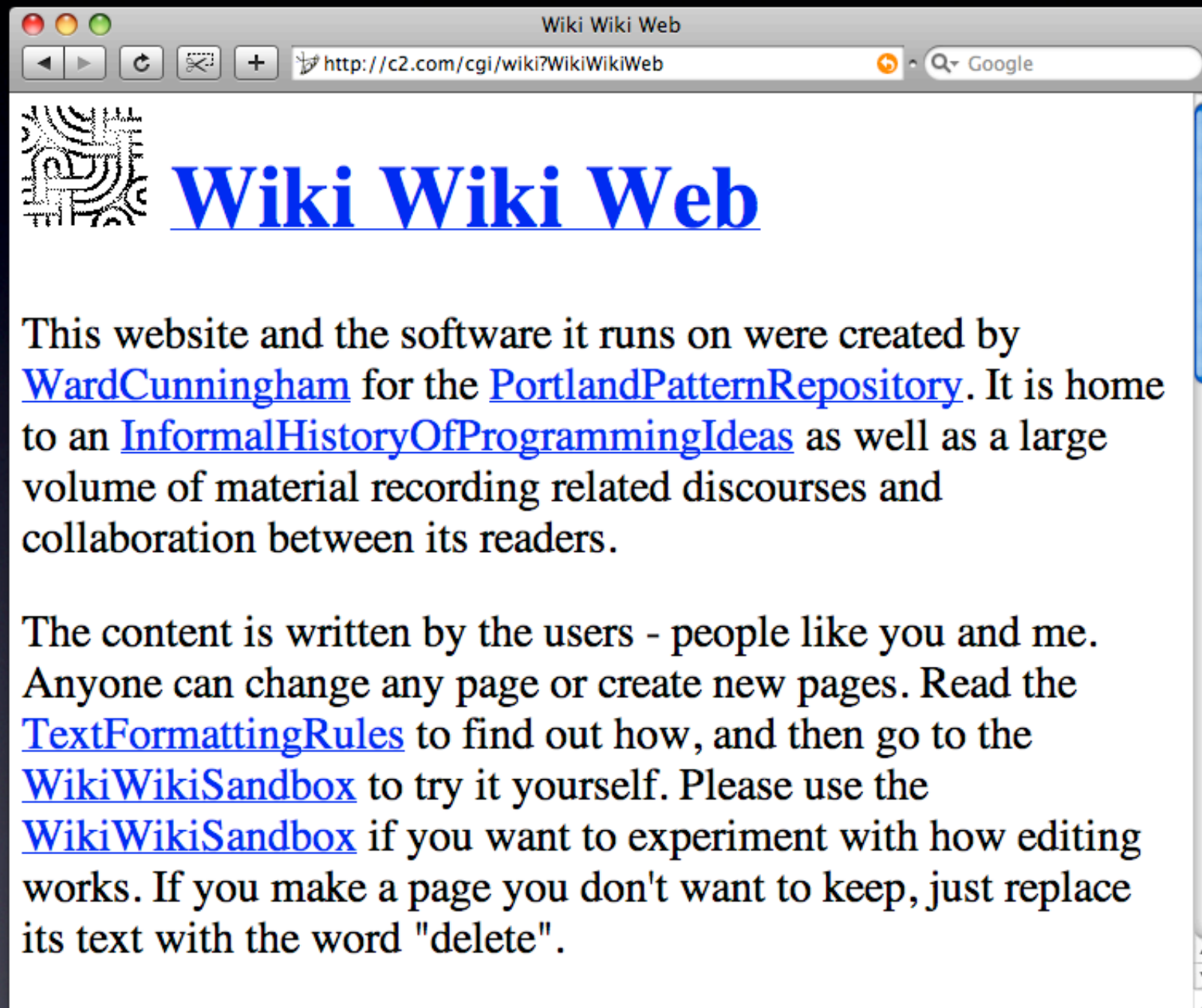
Wiki is community

Wiki is documentation

Wiki is organizational hub

Wiki is people!

The primeval soup...

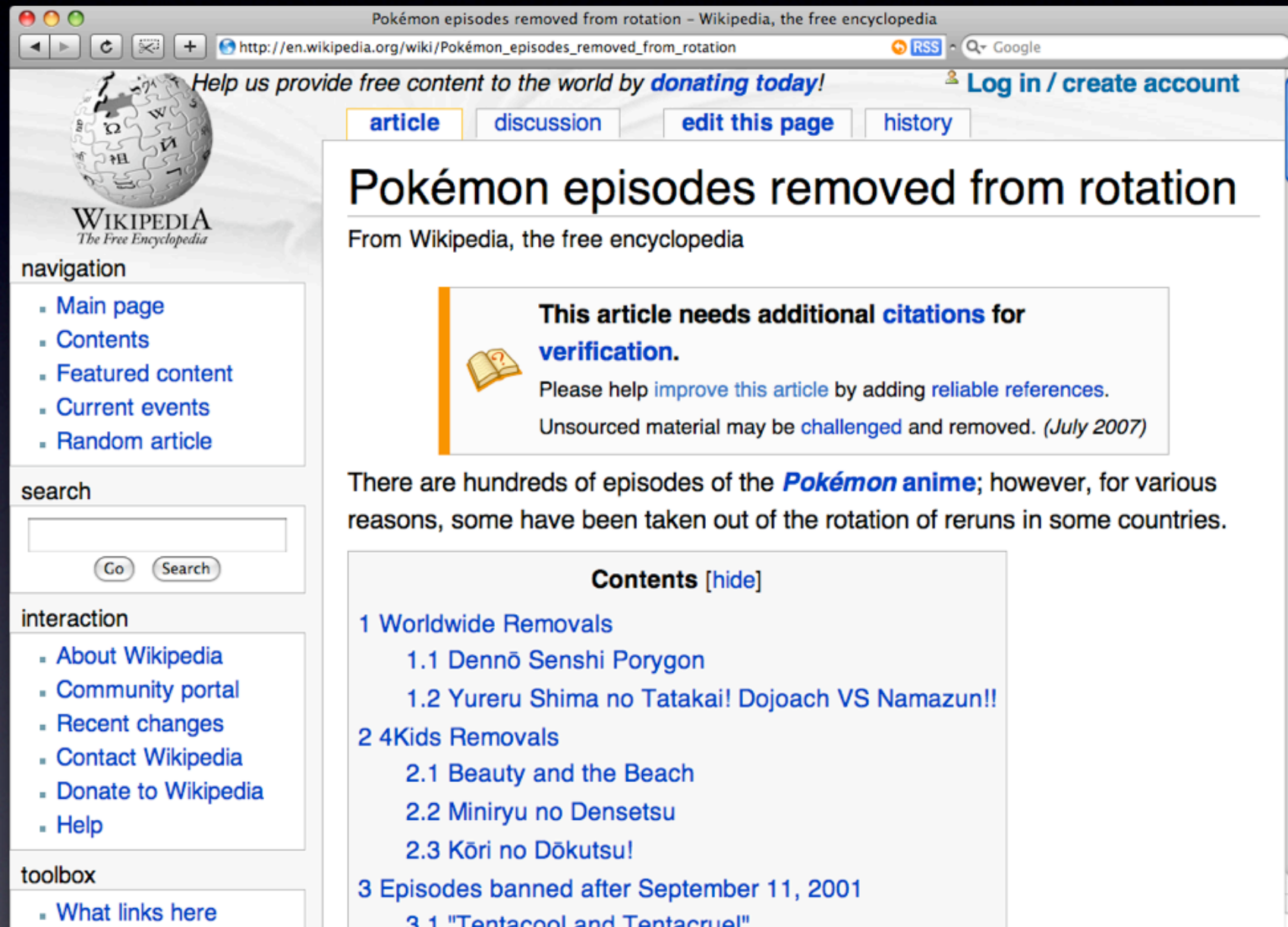


“Ward’s wiki”
1995-

Bunch of geeks
writing about
geeky things
like Programming

<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki>

Wikipedia!

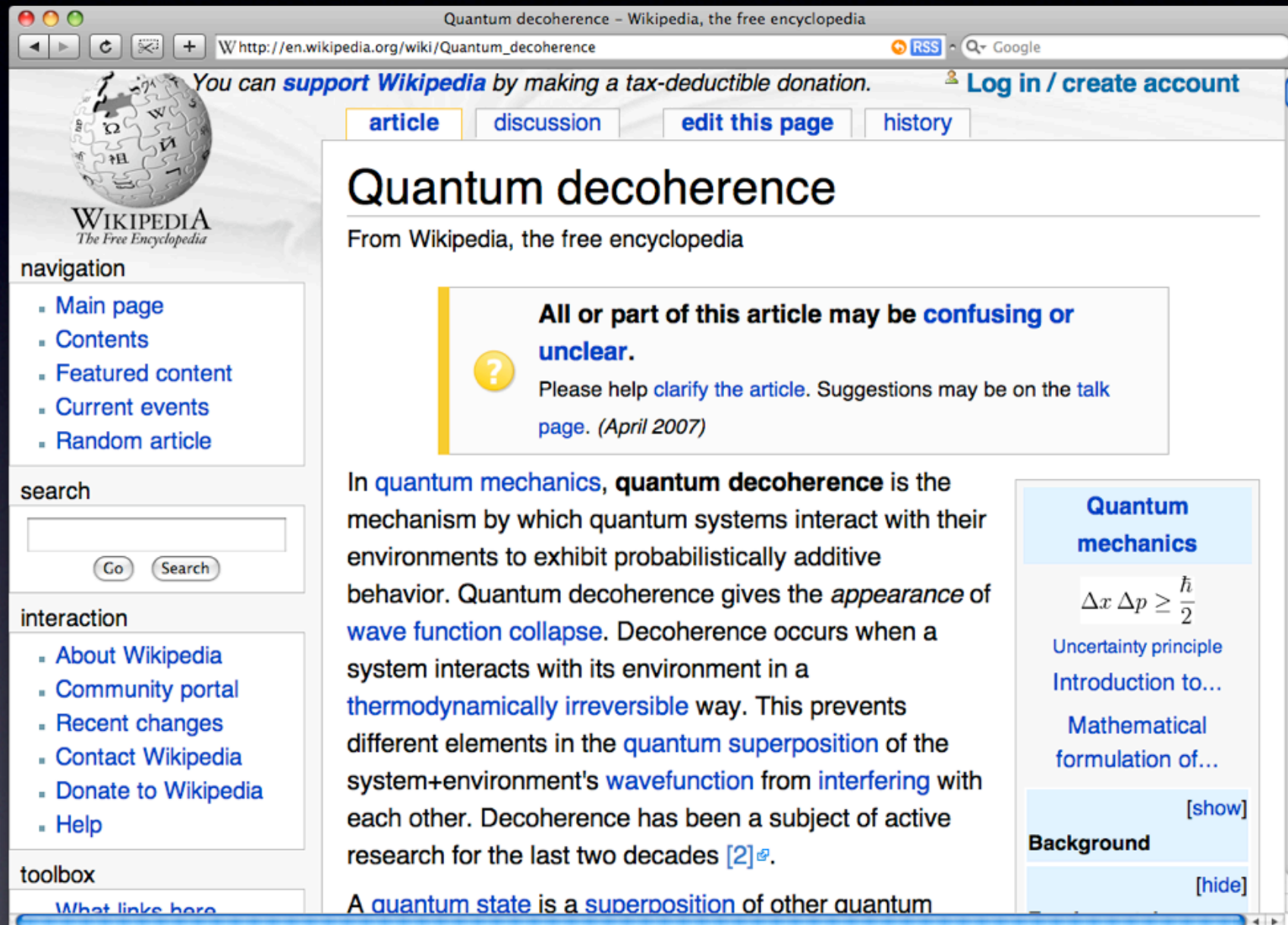


Wikipedia
2001 -

Bunch of geeks
writing about
geeky things
like Pokémon

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

Wikipedia!



Wikipedia
2001 -

Bunch of geeks
writing about
geeky things
like Physics

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

Wikipedia!



Wikipedia
2001 -

Bunch of geeks
writing about
geeky things
like Politics

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

Wikipedia!



Wikipedia
2001 -

Bunch of geeks
writing about
geeky things
like Poetry

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

Hey, where's the people?



There are two kinds...

- Some wikis are places to talk or organize around some theme or idea - [Ward's Wiki](#)
- Some wikis have a “content creation” goal - [Wikipedia](#), [Wookieepedia](#), [WikiHow](#), etc

But really, there is one

- People communicate and organize around the wiki!

On-wiki channels

- Discussion pages on-wiki, attached to content: [Talk:Philosophy](#), [Talk:Sara Palin](#)
- User-to-user messages, attached to individuals: [User talk:Brion VIBBER](#)
- General discussion areas on wiki:
[Wikipedia:Village Pump](#),
[Wikipedia:Articles For Deletion](#), etc

Back channels

- IRC chat - [#wikipedia](#), [#wikimedia](#), ...
- Mailing lists - lists.wikimedia.org
- Blogs - planet.wikimedia.org
- MySpace/FaceBook/Twitter/identi.ca/
whatevah
- Meetups
- Conferences - [Wikimania](#)

What do they talk about?

- article edits -- **goal-oriented work**
- behavior of other users -- **operations**
- random stuff -- **social hangout**

What's important?

- Shared goal -- feeling of purpose
- Administrative processes -- feeling involved and successful
- Social acceptance -- and it's fun, too!

Community structure?

- Horizontal structure -- jes' a bunch of folks
- But... they **do stuff** in groups...



There is no cabal!



Jimmy Wales




Arbitration
Committee



Shadowy cabal of sysops



Webcomic artists whose articles get deleted



Power scale

No, really...

mixed models:

- Self-organization around interests and themes: WikiProjects - operation by action and consensus
- Mediated organization for administrative work: dispute resolution - candidates chosen by vote out of the community

How to use a wiki effectively?

- **Just do it!**
Set one up or find a hosting service...
- **But... it's not magic.**
“It's not just a wiki machine - it doesn't work out if you don't work at it.”

Possible wiki roles

- Documentation -- “content”
 - Just about any organization can benefit from having a place where it's easy to slap up notes and documents.
 - This is the easiest thing to start with; even if nobody else uses it, at least you're putting your documentation somewhere!

Possible wiki roles

- Organization hub -- “projects”
 - Once people are used to putting completed documentation on the wiki, it becomes an obvious place to put in-progress documents and planning.
 - People discover they can become involved in the planning process!

Possible wiki roles

- Social hangout - “networking”
 - People like to talk about shared interests
 - Making work fun makes it less like work!
 - Making fun productive makes work its own reward...

Questions and more?

<http://leuksman.com/pages/presentations>